



THE BOARD REPORT



2005-2006: Issue 1

September 7, 2005 and October 5, 2005

The following is a summary of the September 7, 2005, and October 5, 2005, meetings of the State Board of Education.

CONDITION OF EDUCATION

The Board received the *Condition of Education in Connecticut*, a booklet containing key data focused on the Board's four education learning initiatives for excellence (Ed-LIFE):

- Who are we teaching?
- Who is teaching?
- What and how are we teaching?
- How well are we teaching?

In response to the question "Who are we teaching?," data are provided on enrollment, prekindergarten experience, special education incidence, educational settings of students with disabilities, number of English language learners, and minority student and staff enrollment.

Data on certified staff members, staffing quality indicators and the BEST Program are provided to address "Who is teaching?"

The report sets forth the following information to address "What and how are we teaching?": the amount of instructional time devoted to language arts and mathematics, students per instructional computer; and information about family resource centers, funding for the Open Choice and interdistrict magnet programs, and 2003-04 revenue sources and expenditure data.

Data are provided on the 2004 Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test, NAEP, SAT, AP, cumulative four-year high school dropout rate, and the percentage of students passing all four physical fitness assessments.

The report also focuses on how the state is progressing on several important indicators in closing the achievement gap between Education Reference Group I (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham) and the rest of the state.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CABINET

Dr. Janice Gruendel, Governor Rell's Senior Advisor for Early Childhood, summarized Governor Rell's expectations for the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, established during the 2005 legislative session. The Cabinet is co-chaired by Dr. Gruendel, representing the Governor, and Commissioner Sternberg. Its agenda over the year includes fulfilling its specific legislative charge, accomplishing a set of tasks requested by the Governor and implementing responsibilities outlined in Connecticut's Birth to Five "Early Childhood Partners" comprehensive systems development plan. (continued on page 2)

Oath of Office:

Áine McCarthy and Rebecca Crosswaith

Newly appointed student State Board of Education members Áine McCarthy and Rebecca Crosswaith were administered the *Oath of Office of Public Official*. Áine, a senior at Waterford High School, and Rebecca, a senior at Newington High School, were appointed by Governor Rell to serve on the Board for the period July 2005 through June 2006.

Chairman Allan B. Taylor welcomed Áine and Rebecca to the Board, noting the importance of students' views concerning how to improve the quality of public education. This is the eighth year the Connecticut State Board of Education has had student members.

Early Childhood Education Cabinet (continued from page 1)

The Cabinet will also conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the school readiness program and will promote consistency of quality and comprehensiveness of early childhood services. In addition, Dr. Gruendel explained, the Governor expects the Cabinet to review the State Department of Education's and State Department of Social Services' budget requests for Fiscal Year 2007, and to advise the Governor and OPM if new or expanded programs or increased funding for existing programs are needed. Governor Rell expects an interim report on the Cabinet's findings in February, followed by a final report in June 2006. The report will contain information on capital planning and a workforce improvement and expansion plan.

ACHIEVEMENT GAINS OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, A PRESENTATION BY DR. JAMES P. COMER, M.D., YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER

Dr. James P. Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center and Associate Dean of the School of Medicine at Yale, described the critical role of child and adolescent development in improving student achievement. Dr. Comer is one of the founders of the School Development Program (SDP) at the Yale Child Study Center. He told the Board that an entire district needs to focus on child and adolescent development; this includes the school board, central office and participating schools. "If you create a good school culture and allow for attachments and bonding to occur between adults and students, children will do well regardless of their race or socioeconomic status," Dr. Comer noted. Children must be prepared to participate in the educational process. He proposed a "no fault" decision-making process at the school level, working

collaboratively for the good of children. He suggested that one way to address the physical, psychosocial and intellectual development of teachers is through the certification/accreditation process. All teachers should be instructed in how to create a culture that helps children develop, which should be a requirement of teacher preparation programs.

Dr. Comer pointed to success realized in five districts that have used the SDP: Asheville City Schools, North Carolina; Hertford County Public Schools, North Carolina; Community School District No. 17, New York City; Westbury Community School District, Long Island, New York; and the City of Orange Township, Orange, New Jersey.

BRISTOL PUBLIC SCHOOLS: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LEARNING INITIATIVE

Dr. Michael Wasta, Superintendent of the Bristol Public Schools, described the success realized by Bristol over the past four years after implementing the principles and practices of standards-based education and data-driven decision making. Dr. Wasta noted that these practices, espoused by Dr. Douglas Reeves of the Center for Performance Assessment, have been integrated into all aspects of the system and are showing dramatic improvement in student achievement. "A laser-like focus is required to implement these practices, along with supportive leadership and patience," Dr. Wasta told the Board. Denise Carabetta, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, described how all administrators and staff members working with data were trained, the process used to develop districtwide and individual school goals, how instructional strategies to attain these goals were developed, and the importance of using measurements directly linked to student achievement. Dennis Bieu, Principal of Edgewood Elementary School, explained how the data were used at his school, with the objective of eliminating inconsistent performance in Grade 4. A longitudinal study of three strands of the reading comprehension test revealed weaknesses at certain strands. This knowledge was used to change instruction in kindergarten through Grade 5 to ensure that students mastered the skills being assessed.

Dorothy Raviele, Coordinator of World Languages, and Amanda Robustelli, a french teacher at Bristol Central High School, described their coordinated efforts to determine why some teachers realized better results in their students' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. "Dipsticks," an informal word to describe formative assessments, are used regularly to modify instructional strategies to ensure positive results, they stated. Faculty members identified "power standards" on which to focus their attention; while these comprise only one-sixth of the state's standards, they added, they are the items that are tested and are therefore critically important.

Deputy Superintendent Susan Moreau described the steps that were taken to improve student attendance, noting that attendance rose from 56 to 72 percent of students attending school 95 percent of the time. Dropout prevention steps, including providing alternative types of education to those who have not been successful in the traditional high school, were taken to decrease the number of students who leave school. Dr. Wasta added, "Another measure that has made a huge difference is making 'writing count' in all classes. This is clearly shown in our improved CAPT scores."

Dr. Wasta concluded by emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach and regular use of data over time.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

In July 2003, the State Board of Education approved the replacement of its state-developed teacher preparation program approval standards with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards. Currently, all 17 Connecticut teacher preparation programs, including the Alternate Route to Certification programs, are reviewed based on NCATE standards. The six NCATE standards are (1) candidate knowledge, skills and dispositions; (2) assessment system and unit evaluation; (3) field experiences and clinical practice; (4) diversity; (5) faculty qualifications, performance and development; and (6) unit governance and resources. The visiting team conducting the evaluation considers the institutional report, site visit data, interview data and standard rubrics. The NCATE standards are applied whether an institution is seeking NCATE accreditation or state accreditation.

ADULT EDUCATION

The Board received a summary report on adult education services provided to Connecticut's adult learners. Mandated program offerings include Citizenship, Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED), High School Credit Diploma and External Diploma Program. All services are geared to help adults become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency, and to complete their secondary school education. Equally important, adult education assists those individuals who are parents obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children and serve as role models for their children.

In fiscal year 2004, nearly 33,000 Connecticut residents participated in adult education programs. Of these, 71 percent were members of minority groups, 53 percent were female, and 43 percent participated in the ESL program. A total of 4,876 high school diplomas were awarded through the programs available (Adult High School Credit Diploma, 1,907; External Diploma Program, 128; and GED, 2,841). Early childhood education, adult education, and parenting classes served 220 Even Start families.

The Department is an active partner in Connecticut's one-stop delivery system, an initiative designed to connect employment, education and training services into a coherent network of resources provided in a coordinated manner.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Board received the end-of-year financial report for fiscal year 2005, a summary of the 2005-06 state and federal expenditures for education, and an overview of the 2005-06 Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant.

The 2005-06 ECS entitlements will be determined by applying a two percent increase to the 2004-05 entitlements and adding additional amounts as prescribed in Public Act 05-245. The resulting increases range from 3 percent to just under 11 percent. The overall percentage increase in the 2005-06 grant (\$1,619,487,101) from 2004-05 is 3.61 percent, a \$56,473,151 increase.

Chief Financial Officer Brian Mahoney explained the two main components of the mandates associated with ECS: the Minimum Expenditure Requirement (MER) and the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR). Both components require districts to provide the same level of local support to education as in the prior year and pass all ECS funds to the board of education. Neither mandate requires additional local funds from one year to the next.

In addition, the Board approved technical adjustments to the Department's budget for submission to the Office of Policy and Management. The adjustments are needed to fulfill current levels of service and to comply with legislation passed in the 2005 legislative session without the proper adjustments to the budget.

NUTRITION GUIDELINES

The State Department of Education is in the process of developing nutrition and physical activity guidelines to promote the development and implementation of comprehensive school nutrition policies by local boards of education. These are being developed in response to Governor Rell's directive to SDE to develop such guidelines, as well as the passage of federal legislation requiring that public and private schools and residential child-care institutions that participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's child nutrition programs establish a local wellness policy by the first day of the 2006-07 school year.

A review panel has been meeting to fulfill this responsibility and is expected to conclude its work in February 2006. A summit is planned for February 1, 2006, at the Farmington Marriott, to bring school district stakeholders together, provide the additional resources and strategies needed for local success, and further enhance the policy development process.

WORLD LANGUAGE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Board adopted the 2005 Connecticut World Language Curriculum Framework. The framework will serve as a guide for school districts as they develop curriculum that will challenge students and strengthen world language programs. It is based on the work of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project and recent research findings.

The framework contains content standards for prekindergarten through Grade 12 in communication; culture; connections between the language and culture being studied with other academic disciplines; comparisons among languages and cultures; and how the students' knowledge of the language and culture enriches their lives. The framework has been sent to all school districts and is accessible on the Department's website.

COMMITTEES FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED EDUCATORS

The Department is establishing committees to develop strategies that address the projected number of educators expected to retire over the next 10 years. Special emphasis will be placed on urban districts and identified shortage areas. The Department will appoint members to four statewide committees, including a steering committee that will research educational issues that will define K-12 education over the next decade and develop strategies to ensure that a professional educator workforce is in place to meet the needs of Connecticut's students. The Certification and Educator Preparation Regulation Committee will review the statutes and regulations governing certification, while another committee will review research related to teacher induction and examine how it impacts Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training Program. The Professional Development and Educator Evaluation Committee will research and review professional development methods and strategies for the K-12 teaching profession.

The four committees will meet over the next 12 months, and the chair of the steering committee will present recommendations to the State Board of Education in 2006.

TESTING REQUIREMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In September 2000, the State Board of Education adopted the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) for Oral Listening and Reading and Writing Assessments to assess limited-English-proficient children (English language learners). The LAS has since been revised, and is now referred to as the LAS Links. The revised test was determined to be an appropriate instrument to measure the linguistic progress and proficiency status for English language learners in Connecticut to meet the No Child Left Behind mandated annual testing requirement. The benchmark was set at Level 4, as recommended by the publisher of this assessment, to determine proficiency.

IMPARTIAL HEARING BOARD CONCERNING SCHOOL ACCOMMODATIONS AND STUDENT EXPULSIONS

Ruben Acosta, Elisabeth Borrino, R. Thomas Clark, Donal Collimore, Mary Gelfman, Janis Jerman, Thomas McNeill, Jr., Peggy Pschirrer, Kevin Randolph, Steve Rolnick and Christine Spak were reappointed to the Impartial Hearing Board Concerning School Accommodations and Student Expulsions for four-year terms effective August 8, 2005. Members of the Impartial Hearing Board Concerning School Accommodations render final decisions on matters concerning transportation, residency or other matters. As the board of education for the Connecticut Technical High School System, the State Board is authorized to appoint an impartial hearing board to conduct student expulsion hearings within the technical high schools. The hearing board, comprised of one or more members, has the authority to conduct the expulsion hearing and render a final decision in such matter.

IMPARTIAL HEARING BOARD CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION DUE PROCESS HEARINGS

The Board appointed Jackie Belf-Becker, Elisabeth Borrino, Janis Jerman and Keith Yagaloff as impartial hearing officers for special education due process hearings for four-year terms commencing September 7, 2005. Section 10-76h(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the Board to appoint an impartial hearing officer or hearing board to confirm, modify or reject the identification, evaluation or educational placement of or the provision of a free, appropriate public education to a student who requires, or may require, special education and related services.

ASSESSING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN CONNECTICUT

The Department presented to the Board a report providing the current status of and concerns about the federal requirements concerning testing students with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education requested that the following changes be made in the out-of-level testing program:

Any alternate assessment, including out-of-level testing, would be available only to those students with significant cognitive disabilities. This is not the population that has previously participated in out-of-level testing, as it was designed for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Alternate content and performance standards would be developed to reflect student performance relative to their current grade level standards rather than the standards of the out-of-grade level tested. This would require the development of a vertical scale.

Only 1 percent of the total grade-level testers who scored as proficient on both the CAPT Checklist and the out-of-level testing could be used in the calculation of AYP. This cap allows for no additional value to AYP performance figures. The Department has made four requests to be allowed to return to testing students with disabilities at their PPT-determined instructional level, rather than their enrolled grade level. The USDE has denied each of these requests.

The CMT/CAPT skills checklist for Connecticut students with the most significant cognitive impairments is currently under revision. The USDE, in 2003, clarified the requirement that alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards must reflect grade-level content. The Department is developing seven new checklists (one each for grades 3-8 and 10) that reflect grade-level content. These will be ready for the March 2006 test administration.

In April 2005, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced new flexibility that will permit states to develop modified achievement standards for a limited group of students with disabilities; develop alternate assessments based on those modified achievement standards that are aligned with grade-level content standards; and include proficient scores from these assessments (at a 2.0 percent cap at the district and state levels) in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP). For 2004-05 AYP determinations only, the USDE allowed qualified states to apply additional flexibility to those schools that fail to make AYP in the "students with disabilities" category only. States may calculate a proxy to determine the percentage of students with disabilities that is equivalent to 2.0 percent of all students assessed. This proxy will then be added to the percent of students with disabilities who are proficient. The adjusted percent proficient is what would be used to determine AYP for students with disabilities. While Connecticut was determined to be a qualified state, the application of the proxy made no difference in the AYP status of the schools that were identified solely on the basis of the students with disabilities subgroup.

Preliminary cost projections for the development of a modified assessment indicate that, due to the small number of students who are expected to be assessed using this modified assessment, the cost will be approximately \$401 per student, for a total of \$1,564,590. (The grade-level test administered to regular education students costs approximately \$38 per student).

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

The Board discussed a report showing four different ways to calculate high school graduation rates, one indicator of the effectiveness of our public secondary school programs. Beginning in school year 2006-07, Connecticut will begin using individual student data through the Public School Information System, rather than aggregated data in its calculation of a graduation rate. It will take four years before a graduation rate can be calculated based solely on an individual student identifier.

The Department has instituted a High School Advisory Committee to develop a Framework for 21st Century High Schools and a transition model for change. Two grants for which the Department has applied will support its efforts: the National Governor's Association for Best Practices Honor States Grant Program and the U.S. Department of Education School Dropout Prevention Program Grant.

COMMITMENT TO EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Board adopted a Statement of Commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity, which will serve as the preface for the Department's Affirmative Action Plan.

The statement reads, in part, "The Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to the concept and practice of Equal Employment Opportunity for all persons...The State Board of Education oversees the State Department of Education, which actively recruits from protected groups and makes special efforts to seek out individuals for employment and career advancement....The State Department of Education strives to employ throughout the agency a diverse staff capable of providing for excellence in education."

CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The Board appointed Dr. Cynthia Dubea, Dean of the Division of Education at Quinnipiac University, and reappointed Mr. Brian Maitland, Financial Advisor at People's Bank, to serve on the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards for three-year terms effective September 7, 2005. The Council advises the Governor, State Board of Education and the Education Committee of the General Assembly on matters relating to teacher preparation, recruitment, certification, professional development, assessment and evaluation, and teacher professional discipline. It also reviews and comments on regulations and other standards concerning teacher preparation programs and certification and has developed a code of professional responsibility for teachers.

MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Board approved the 2005 Connecticut Mathematics Curriculum Framework for Grades PreK-12. The framework reflects extensive feedback from many stakeholders. It provides districts with clear and coherent mathematics standards that will guide the development of a mathematics curriculum that is rigorous, relevant and accessible to all students, from prekindergarten through Grade 12. It is intended to promote student understanding of the applications and implications of mathematics and technology in the 21st century, prepare students for successful postsecondary endeavors, motivate students to pursue advanced mathematics careers, and articulate a common core of mathematics learning that will be assessed on the Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

CHARTER SCHOOL SEATS: REVISED ENROLLMENT FOR 2005-06

The Board authorized the redistribution of 35 seats in six state charter schools for the 2005-06 year. While the total number of seats previously authorized by the Board (2,944) will not change, four schools requested additional seats (Elm City College Preparatory School, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridge Academy and

Stamford Academy), while two charter schools expressed willingness to decrease the number of their authorized seats (ISAAC and Amistad Academy). It should be noted that both ISAAC and Amistad Academy continue to have a net gain in the number of seats over the prior year (15 and 21, respectively).

The Board determined that the six schools requesting more seats are able to accommodate additional students without affecting the educational program.

SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (ALTLMS)

The Board granted full approval to the Advanced Alternative Preparation for School Library Media Specialist Certification Program (ALTLMS) administered by the Department of Higher Education's Alternate Route to Certification Program for a five-year period ending September 30, 2010. An interim report is due September 30, 2008.

The Board's action is based on the 2005 ALTLMS Institutional Report, findings of the visiting team during its accreditation visit, and review and conclusions drawn by the State Department of Education Review Committee following presentations by the accreditation team chairperson and ALTLMS representatives.

SAINT JOSEPH COLLEGE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The Board granted full approval to the undergraduate and graduate preparation programs certifying graduates for the initial and advanced programs at Saint Joseph College, for a five-year period ending September 30, 2010.

The Board based its action on the findings of the visiting team's accreditation visit and review and conclusions by the State Department of Education Program Review Committee after presentations by the accreditation team chairperson and college representatives. All six NCATE standards were deemed "met" by the visiting team.

ALTERNATE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

The Board granted full approval to the Alternate Route to Certification Programs I & II for a five-year period ending September 30, 2010. The program, administered by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, provides a summer program on classroom management and instructional methodology to attract individuals from other professions seeking entry into the field of teaching. A second component of ARC targets the preparation of teachers for shortage-area subjects. The Board's action was based on the 2005 Alternate Route to Certification Institutional Report, findings of a visiting team and the comments of the State Department of Education Program Review committee. All six of the NCATE standards were deemed "met" as a result of the on-site review of ARC programs.

APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDS

The Board approved the Department's applications for the following funds:

- *School Dropout Prevention Program Grant*, \$2.5 million over a three-year period. Funds will enable the state to implement a comprehensive statewide program to support dropout prevention and high school re-entry efforts. Funds will support an information network, professional development, implementation of research-based strategies in school districts, and a part-time state program manager.
- *National Governor's Association Grant*, \$1 million for a two-year period. Funds will be used to support priority school districts' efforts to increase the number of Advanced Placement courses offered in their schools; provide assistance to low-performing schools; provide staff development; increase the effectiveness of our PK-16 data system; and support a PK-16 Education Council.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM

Congratulations!

Chairman Allan Taylor called to the Board's attention the September 14, 2005, Hartford Courant article, "Progress in the Technical Schools" and commended Superintendent Hughes for her leadership during the past year.

Back to School Report

Superintendent Abigail Hughes provided a report on the opening of the 2005 school year, noting that enrollment was as 10,347 as of October 1, 2005. The percentage of English language learners and special education students remained basically the same as in 2004-05 while the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch declined by 4 percent. However, she cautioned, approximately 500 additional students are expected to apply and be certified before the end of October, making the percentage consistent with prior years (34%).

When looking at the 9th grade class last year compared with this year, the percentage of English language learners remained constant at 7 percent, while the percentage of special

education students rose from 12 to 13 percent. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch declined from 38 percent to 37 percent.

For this same population, the overall minority population increased by two percent, from 41 percent to 43 percent. The number of males and females in the 9th grade class remained the same in both years (63% and 37%, respectively).

The overall minority population increased by one percentage point to 41 percent, while the percentage of males decreased by one percentage point, to 64 percent. The percentage of females increased from 35 percent to 36 percent from the 2004-05 to the 2005-06 school year, Dr. Hughes stated.

Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plan

The Board granted a one-year extension to CTHSS to develop a Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Plan, in accordance with Section 10-151b of the Connecticut General Statutes.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2005)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Address: 165 Capitol Avenue
Room 301
Hartford, CT 06106

Telephone: (860) 713-6510

Facsimile: (860) 713-7002

E-Mail: pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us

To obtain a copy of a report
considered by the Board,
please contact the Office of
Communications,
860-713-6526.

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The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of ***The Board Report***. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us.